

I Can't Sleep (Without You) by randomdude05

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, M/M, Post-Stranger Things 2, Pre-Relationship, Sickfic, Sort Of, blink and you'll miss it

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-07-13

Updated: 2021-07-13

Packaged: 2022-03-31 11:23:11

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,016

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Prompt from @onearmedlegend on Tumblr: "Billy realizing Steve isn't getting enough sleep, due to him falling asleep in class? Then as like an apology for smashing his head with a plate, Billy brings Steve an extra snack/drink every morning. As well as helping his health?"

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Author's Note:

This is my first time fulfilling a request! I would love for people to send me more. It really helps for practicing writing.

Not beta'd!

Ever since the night at the Byers, since the night where Billy lost control and went *too far*, Billy had been avoiding Harrington like the plague. It was easy enough, considering Billy was a junior and Steve was a senior, but they shared gym and AP calculus BC first period (to which Billy cursed the gods who made him take math so early in the morning). At first Billy had resorted to sitting at the back of class and doing his best to avoid looking at Harrington at all. He wanted to apologize, but Steve had been carefully ignoring Billy as well.

Around the two week mark since That Night, Billy decided to corner Steve before class, mind set on making things right.

“Hey, Prettyboy,” Billy called out, making his way towards Steve, who was slowly putting textbooks in his backpack. Harrington gave no indication that he heard Billy, continuing to rummage around his locker rather tiredly.

“Harrington!” Billy tried again.

“What?” This time Steve looked up, and Billy had to hold back a gasp. Steve looked tired. No, he looked exhausted. His skin was a sickly pale color, his face gaunt and eyes sunken. He looked like he'd never seen a bed in his life.

“You look like shit,” Billy commented without a second thought.

Steve sighed, rubbing a hand down his face. “Did you come here just to insult me or did you need something, cause I’m not in the mood for your shit right now, Hargrove,” Steve said languidly.

“I... I just wanted to say I’m sorry for... you know.” Billy knew he was shit at apologizing, but this was going worse than he expected. Goddamn Harrington with his stupid hair and soft doe eyes making him forget how to talk.

Steve scoffed. “No, I actually don’t know, cause you have so much shit to apologize for. Are you apologizing for attacking and terrorizing a group of thirteen year olds? Or the fact that you beat the shit out of me? Or maybe you’re apologizing for being just a grade-A asshole!” Billy wasn’t expecting Steve’s mini blow-up, which must have been evident on his face. Steve shook his head at that. “Look, man. I really don’t care. Just leave me alone.” Steve shut his locker and started walking away.

“Wait!” Billy called out almost impulsively, then cursed himself for even saying anything. Steve stopped for a second, visibly contemplating whether or not he should give Billy the time of day, then turned around exasperatedly.

Billy was surprised that he even stopped. He didn’t even have anything more to say, but he had already called out. Scrambling for a response, he dug into his backpack for a banana, then held it out to Steve. “Take care of yourself, Princess.”

Steve stared at the banana for a second, then took it reluctantly, mumbling out a “whatever” before heading to class.

Billy spent the rest of class staring at Steve, watching his head loll back and forth as he attempted to stay awake. There were only ten minutes left in the class when Harrington finally settled with his head resting on his arms. The boy startled awake at the bell, head shooting up like a meerkat. Billy stifled a laugh at that.

Throughout the day, Billy watched Steve like he never watched him before. And it was depressing. Harrington looked as if he floated through life, not giving any thought to what he was doing. He trudged through the halls, slept through lunch, and played poorly during basketball, pushing himself to exhaustion and not taking water breaks.

This routine went on for about a week when one day, Harrington collapsed on the court. Billy barely stopped himself from rushing to his side. Steve woke just a few seconds later, tired eyes landing confusedly on Billy, who was staring down at him, looking too concerned for his liking. The team had crowded around Steve while the coach barked a “What happened?” from across the court.

“Sorry, coach,” Harrington replied, pushing himself up into a sitting position as the coach jogged over. “I’m fine.”

“You sure, kid? Don’t think I haven’t noticed you’ve been off your game.”

“Really, sir, I can keep going,” Harrington argued. Steve tried standing fully, but nearly fell again, catching himself on Billy’s arm. He looked up at the coach sheepishly after his display of clearly not being fine. The coach looked at him with a furrowed brow, lips pressed into a thin line.

“Hargrove!” The coach barked.

“Yes, sir?”

“Take Harrington to the nurse.”

“Ok, sir.”

“And bring your backpacks with you. There are only ten minutes left in practice.”

“Got it, sir.”

Coach blew his whistle and the team reconvened at halfcourt while Billy and Harrington made their way out of the gym. The nurse’s office was on the other side of campus, so the walk was long and silent. Billy kept glancing at Harrington, who was staring intently at the floor. Steve somehow looked worse than a week ago. His eyes were bloodshot, his lips pale, and hands shaking. Billy was honestly shocked at Harrington’s deterioration. He couldn’t help but feel worried for the other boy. What could possibly be making Harrington so exhausted?

Finally, he spoke up. "Jeez, Harrington. What is up with you lately?"

"I don't know what you mean," Steve deadpanned.

"You sleep in class, you sleep during lunch, you can barely stay awake during basketball, let alone hydrate and feed yourself. Clearly something is wrong."

Harrington narrowed his eyes. "What's it to you?"

"Nothing. I'm just... worried." Harrington scoffed at that, then went back to staring at the floor. The two boys got to the nurse's office, the nurse gesturing for them to sit in the waiting room while she finished with another student. They sat on opposite sides of the room.

Two minutes of silence passed when Steve finally spoke up. "You can leave, you know. I got to the nurse all fine and dandy."

"I know," Billy replied. "Like I said, I'm just worried about you." Harrington looked at him like he still didn't believe him.

Another two minutes passed before Steve spoke again. "Nightmares."

"What?" Billy said, startled out of a daydream.

“I haven’t been sleeping because of nightmares,” Harrington clarified.

“Oh.” A beat passes before Billy unzips his backpack, reaching in and handing a water bottle to Steve, who raises an eyebrow at the gift.

“Take it,” Billy insisted. “I have another in my locker.”

Harrington accepted the bottle. Billy tried not to stare as Steve unscrewed the top and started guzzling the water like his life depended on it. He tried not to notice the way Steve’s adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed the large gulps of water, or how the water ran down the sides of his mouth before joining at his chin and continuing down his neck. When just over half of the bottle was gone, Harrington stopped, wiping his mouth and muttering a breathless “thanks” to Billy before stuffing the water bottle into his own backpack.

“Also exercise,” Billy says. “And reading.” When Billy sees the confusion in Steve’s face, he clarifies, “For nightmares. Exercising and reading before bed. It helps tire you out and lessens the vivid dreams.” Harrington takes in the information, nodding slowly.

The two boys went back to sitting in silence until the nurse called them in. “What seems to be the problem, sweetheart?” Nurse Davidson asked sweetly.

“Oh, nothing, ma’am,” Harrington started. “The coach just-”

“It’s not nothing,” Billy interjected. “He fainted on the court. He seems a bit dehydrated, so I gave him water, and apparently he hasn’t been sleeping well.”

“Oh, dear. Well thank you for bringing him to me, Mr. Hargrove. You can head back to class now,” The nurse says while writing down some notes.

“No problem, ma’am,” Billy says. He picks up his backpack and makes his way towards the door. Before leaving, he turns towards Harrington. “Take care, Steve,” Billy said as he pointedly ignores the fact that he called Harrington by his first name. As he leaves the room, he looks back at Steve one last time, who is laying rather dramatically on the exam table with a thermometer sticking out of his mouth. Billy shakes his head, chuckling at the sight before making his way to AP Physics.

Billy couldn’t stop worrying about Harrington for the rest of the day. He knew a thing or two about nightmares himself. He knew how draining they could be, thinking back to all the nights he startled awake, fighting off a phantom Neil, unable to fall asleep after. It was clear that Steve could barely take care of himself in this state, so Billy decided to make the effort to help him out a little, or at least until Harrington seemed a little better.

So Billy starts giving him fruits before first period. He’ll just drop an apple or banana on Steve’s desk on the way to the back of the classroom without saying anything.

During lunch he’ll place a sandwich next to Harrington’s sleeping

figure, watching him wake up ten minutes before the bell, notice the sandwich, then proceed to scarf it down.

At practice, Billy calls time-out every once in a while, pulling two water bottles out of his backpack and handing one to Harrington.

It becomes a thing, Billy taking care of Steve when he's too exhausted to do it himself. Now in the mornings, when Billy walks into the classroom, Steve holds out his hand absentmindedly to accept whatever the fruit of the day is. At lunch, he leaves post-its with thank you notes written on them next to his head while he sleeps. At practice, Billy and Steve start moving as a unit, playing together then taking water breaks together. The coach notices the obvious change from enemies on the court to working as one. He pulls them aside one day and praises them for putting their grievances behind them, which they both shrug off.

Eventually Harrington does start looking better. His dark circles become less prominent and he gains back some color. He's awake more often than not at lunch, and is more on top of his game during practice.

One day, he pulls Billy aside after practice in the locker room. "Thanks, man. For everything," Steve says sheepishly. "The exercising and reading... it's really helped."

Billy smiles a bit at that, and shrugs, saying, "It's no big deal, dude." Because really, it wasn't. Billy enjoyed taking care of Harrington.

What he didn't expect was for Steve to pull a wad of cash out of his

back pocket and start counting off bills. He hands Billy a sizable amount, which Billy gawks at.

“It’s fifty bucks.” When the confusion doesn’t leave Billy’s face, he clarifies, “About four weeks of you giving me food and water.”

Billy quickly shoves the money back into Harrington’s hand. “Like I said. It’s no big deal. You really don’t have to pay me back.”

“I insist,” Steve argues.

“Yeah? Well *I* insist!” Billy throws back at him. Harrington looks torn between throwing the money at Billy and running away or putting all the money back in his pocket when Billy says, “You can pay me back by doing me a favor.”

“Yeah?”

“Accept my apology,” Billy says with finality.

“Well, alright, man. I accept, I guess-”

“And hang out with me,” Billy adds. Upon seeing the surprise on Harrington’s face, he quickly retracts. “Or don’t. That’s fine, too. I was just-”

“It’s fine, Hargrove,” Steve interrupts with a laugh. “I’ll hang out with you.”

“Really?” Billy says in disbelief.

“Yeah. I don’t have anything after school tomorrow, so meet me at Benny’s at 3:30.”

“Ok,” Billy says tightly, still not believing that Steve agreed.

“Ok,” Steve echos. “It’s a date.”

Billy doesn’t even have time to comprehend what was said before Harrington leaves the locker room.

“It’s a date...” Billy repeats to himself. “Oh, fuck, it’s a *date!* ” Billy all but screams into the now empty locker room. He smiles at himself, feeling his heart skipping beats.

Author's Note:

Find me on Tumblr as the-singlet-pringle!